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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003109

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: TFG ON THE BRINK OF IMPLOSION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (S/NF) Summary. Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Hassan Hussein Nur Adde told the Ambassador and PolOff in separate meetings on November 13 that neither was willing to compromise with the other over the formation of a new cabinet as required by the October 27-29 InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit in Nairobi. President Yusuf assured the Ambassador that he was "a man of compromise," and then explained how he would not compromise with Nur Adde. Yusuf said that he would welcome Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS)/Djibouti head Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed into the TFG, including as prime minister. He said Sharif would be a better prime minister than Nur Adde. Prime Minister Nur Adde believed the current cabinet impasse was "the end of the TFG," and said he was considering resigning. He said the ARS/Djibouti should be brought into the government, and said he would not stand in the way. TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah said Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin blamed Washington for this crisis, and Seyoum regretted not having Yusuf removed during the IGAD summit. End Summary.

Yusuf: "I Am a Man of Compromise, He is Not"

12. (S/NF) President Abdullahi Yusuf, in his usual jovial manner, announced to the Ambassador that "I am a man of compromise, but some people are not." Yusuf explained that the prime minister was unwilling to compromise on the composition of the new cabinet. He said Nur Adde was insisting that the five cabinet ministers who did not resign in August be retained, but Yusuf insisted that the new cabinet must be composed of entirely new members, "who were young and competent." Referring to the Prime Minister, Yusuf said, "My God, how do I explain that man," pointing across the hall to Nur Adde's hotel room. The Ambassador queried whether the cabinet would be agreed upon by the deadline established by the IGAD summit to which Yusuf responded, "it depends upon whether others cooperate."

13. (S/NF) Yusuf said he met with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin twice during the course of the day, and that Nur Adde met separately with Seyoum once. Despite repeated inquiries from the Ambassador, Yusuf refused to reveal the content of his discussion with Seyoum except to say that Seyoum had pushed him to find a way to compromise with Nur Adde. When the Ambassador asked him what the Ethiopians were going to do now, Yusuf replied, "ask them, you know them better than I." Yusuf went on to remark that if the Ethiopians were to leave Mogadishu, the African Union Mission

in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force would not last one day against al-Shabaab. Yusuf expected the Ethiopians to withdraw by the end of the year, but he said if the TFG produced some positive progress, the Ethiopians might be convinced to stay longer.

14. (S/NF) Regarding what would happen next if he and the prime minister were unable to agree on a cabinet, Yusuf said he did not know, but added that if the TFG failed, he would return to Puntland and Mogadishu would succumb to chaos. In response to the Ambassador's query whether Yusuf would consider stepping down as president, Yusuf asked, "who would succeed me? That is the problem."

15. (S/NF) The Ambassador stressed to President Yusuf that as the leader of the TFG, he was responsible for making the government work, and he cautioned Yusuf that time was short. Yusuf pushed back, and requested that the Ambassador press Seyoum to push the prime minister to cooperate.

Yusuf: "Sheikh Sharif is Better Than Nur Adde"

16. (S/NF) Turning to the possibility of a unity government, Yusuf said reconciliation was essential and necessary for Somalia. When queried whether he was ready to accept Sheikh Sharif and the ARS/Djibouti into the TFG, Yusuf responded, "if Sharif is a man of peace, I will welcome him into the government." He went on to say that Sharif would be a far better prime minister than Nur Adde.

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17. (S/NF) Yusuf did not think he would meet with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles before he left Ethiopia. From Addis Ababa, Yusuf said he would be traveling to Nairobi to encourage the parliament to return to Baidoa and conduct the business of government. The Ambassador encouraged the president to confer with U.S. Embassy Nairobi as soon as possible.

PM Nur Adde: "This is the End of the TFG"

18. (S/NF) Across the hotel hallway in Nur Adde's room, the clearly exhausted and demoralized Prime Minister announced "this (impasse) is the end of the TFG," and he predicted that Somalia was on the verge of civil war and chaos. Nur Adde confirmed that he and the president could not agree on the new cabinet, and that Yusuf was insisting on all new cabinet members. The Prime Minister said Yusuf thinks the five cabinet members who did not resign "hate him," and said Yusuf views them as his enemies. Nur Adde complained that the president only has the power to approve or disapprove the cabinet. He said, "Yusuf has no power to blackmail me into accepting some and rejecting others." He also predicted that Yusuf would never agree to the proposed cabinet. He complained that Yusuf wanted to be president and prime minister at the same time. Nur Adde gave no indication that he planned to submit to Yusuf's demands and change the cabinet list.

19. (S/NF) Nur Adde said earlier in the day Seyoum had pushed Yusuf to compromise, but Yusuf rejected Seyoum out of hand. The Prime Minister complained that the entire international community was unable to manage one individual who was trying to destroy everything that had been achieved in Somalia. He accused Yusuf of paying off parliament members to not return to Baidoa because Yusuf was afraid that if the parliament established a quorum, they would impeach him. He said Yusuf also feared the Djibouti process, and was using the cabinet issue to stall the establishment of a unity government.

10. (S/NF) The Prime Minister compared Yusuf to former Somali president Siad Barre. He said Barre thought he was

the only man who could rule Somalia, and in the end he was right because Somalia disintegrated once Barre was gone. Nur Adde predicted that Yusuf may well succeed in accomplishing the same feat.

¶11. (S/NF) In light of the current crisis, the Ambassador inquired whether Nur Adde was considering resigning as prime minister. Nur Adde said yes, but that he had made no decision on what to do next, having just finished his separate meeting with Seyoum. Nur Adde said he might go to Nairobi the next day, and then return to Somalia where he would consult with his constituents.

¶12. (S/NF) The ARS/Djibouti and Sheikh Sharif must be brought into the TFG, Nur Adde noted, even including Sharif as prime minister. He explained that the new cabinet was meant to be an interim cabinet until the unity government was formed. He did not know whether or how a unity government could be established without a functioning cabinet.

¶13. (S/NF) Nur Adde said he and Yusuf had planned to meet with Meles after Yusuf had agreed to the cabinet, but now that Yusuf was continuing to refuse the cabinet, Nur Adde did not think the Meles meeting would occur. He emphasized again that "this is the end of the bridge, there is no going back, there is no compromise."

Farah: "Seyoum is Beside Himself with Frustration"

¶14. (S/NF) TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah, who had also met with Seyoum earlier in the day on his own, said Seyoum was "beside himself," and ready to walk away from the TFG leaders. He did not know what the Ethiopians were planning to do now, but he stated that the Ethiopians blamed the United States for this crisis. He said Seyoum regrets having not removed Yusuf at the IGAD summit when they had the chance because the U.S. wanted to keep the status quo.

¶15. (S/NF) Farah also said Sheikh Sharif had planned to

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come to Addis Ababa about the same time as Yusuf and Nur Adde, but once Sharif heard that the two leaders would be in the city at the same time, he delayed his trip not wanting to be seen cooperating with Yusuf. Farah noted that Sharif would refuse to join the TFG until President Yusuf stepped down or was removed.

Comment

¶16. (S/NF) The TFG is sprinting to the finish, and right off the cliff. Although President Yusuf and Prime Minister Nur Adde have been here before, the fact that the Ethiopians, who have more leverage on them than anyone else, were unable to force a compromise suggests that we have reached the end of the road with Yusuf and Nur Adde together in the TFG. Yusuf and Nur Adde appear more willing to let the TFG fail than compromise with each other. At least in Ethiopia's view, one or both of them will have to go. We have not yet been able to ask the Ethiopians what they plan to do next--they themselves may not know--but we anticipate that if they do not opt to withdraw from Mogadishu immediately, they will make a last ditch effort to forge a unity government between the TFG and ARS/Djibouti. How exactly one might do that under the current circumstances remains unclear. The Ethiopian government's perception of the U.S. role in this impasse is of concern, and we expect that it will affect our bilateral relationship. At a minimum, we do believe the Ethiopians will be cool to us on any recommendations on Somalia. End Comment.

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